

Předpokládaný scénář zranitelnosti značky: případ litevského průmyslu kosmetických prostředků a přípravků osobní péče

Foresight Scenario of Brand Vulnerability: The Case of the Lithuanian Beauty and Personal Care Products' Industry Branch

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Abstract:

Purpose of the article: Scientific studies implicate that in order to successfully manage brands in the modern external environment it is important to apply future foresight methods within the planning context and in such way to predict developing factors in the future turbulent external environment and to make proactive brand management decisions, because otherwise brand will become vulnerable, and vulnerability is the main risk assumption. Method of scenario development for foresight of brand vulnerability and proactive response to it is suggested to be applied in this article.

This article covers the following problematic issue: how to develop brand vulnerability foresight scenarios?

Methods: In order to develop vulnerability scenarios of the selected brand, methods of in-depth interview, expert assessment and questioning shall be combined.

Scientific aim: The aim of this study is to develop brand vulnerability foresight scenarios while applying the development methodology of brand vulnerability foresight scenarios.

Findings: This study covers the case of vulnerability foresight of brand acting in the Lithuanian industry branch of beauty and personal care while applying the scenarios' developing method. Four brand vulnerability foresight scenarios of the analysed brand are developed while applying the development methodology of brand vulnerability foresight scenarios.

Conclusions: The results of empiric analysis revealed that the development methodology of brand vulnerability foresight scenarios may be adapted in the industry branch, and thus is sufficiently universal in order to establish vulnerability of brands intended for end-users and to identify proactive branding development solutions. Having implemented the methodology of brand vulnerability scenarios' development, it is implicated that it shall be improved while choosing more efficient development methods of brand vulnerability.

Keywords: scenarios, methodology, uncertainty, brand vulnerability, future tendencies, consumer based brand equity

JEL: M10, M31

Introduction

Brand vulnerability is a threat that in case the consumers' loyalty towards brand weakens consumer based brand equity will decrease or it will be simple. Brand vulnerability develops through consumer based brand equity system which sensitiveness and non-protection allow external environment tendencies directly negatively or through brand awareness, associations, perceived quality parts impact loyal behaviour of consumers with regard to brand (Vainauskiene, Vaitkiene, 2013b). In interdisciplinary context, vulnerability can consumer based brand equity describe consumer based brand equity as an internal negative property of a subject/object/system of not consumer based brand equitying able to maintain the welfare. Object / subject / system vulnerability forms in the context of uncertainty of the outside environment, and that consumer based brand equity comes basis for risk emergence (Vainauskiene, Vaitkiene, 2013a). Uncertainty is the essential dimension characterising the modern outside environment (Ghezzi, 2013; Ebrahimi, 2000), which defines the ambiguity of the results of different organisation activities carried out in the context of unpredictable situations when lacking relevant information (Herzig, Jimmieson, 2006; Ebrahimi, 2000; Wilson, 2009).

Intensive future analyses' methodology development in scientific discussions does not surprise within the context of challenges caused by turbulent external environment (Money, Gardiner, 2005; Becker, 1989; Schoemaker, 1995; Schwab, Cerutti, von Reibnitz, 2003). The future analyses methodology identifies such future analyses methods as scanning of external environment, SWOT analysis, extrapolation of tendencies, simulation modelling, Delphi and brainstorming methods, scenarios' development method, cross-impact analysis, solution tree, etc. (Miles, Keenan, 2002). It must be stressed that the most attention is paid to the method of scenarios development as to a tool of strategic planning in the discussion escalating the methodology of scenarios' development. The latter tendency may be grounded that the scenarios' development method in comparison with other presented future analyses methods is the most universal due to the following reasons: *it enables to purify a grounded future picture while grounding how and why such future will develop* and based on which *the future threats and potentials are identified*; The insight of Thwaites, Glaister (1992) may be followed while summarizing these advantages of scenarios that the application of scenarios' development method is a strategic response to the turbulence of external environment.

Scientific studies, intended for application of scenarios' method for analysis of increase of marketing activity efficiency topic are met in the study field of marketing and branding: Curry, Rimgland and Young (2006) identifies marketing functions which efficiency is increased by the application of scenarios' method: development of marketing strategy, consumers' researches, market analysis, development of new products, evaluation of brand, communication with consumers; Svensson (2002) suggests to apply scenarios' development method for identification of vulnerability in marketing channels; Barton (1994) attributes scenarios' development method to a strategic tool, assisting marketing staff to prepare for crises. *However, scenarios' development method is not applied for identification of brand vulnerability or brand risk.*

Thus this article covers the following **problematic issue**: *how to develop brand vulnerability foresight scenarios?* In order to answer the problematic issue the case of the Lithuanian market of beauty and personal care had consumer based brand equityen selected.

Objective of the research: to develop vulnerability scenarios of the selected brands.

Methods of the research: scenarios' development method, in-depth interview, expert assumption method, open coding.

Conceptual position is used while answering a relevant question:

Three methodological approaches of scenarios' development dominate, i.e.: *La prospective*, intuitive and probability modified tendencies' school (Piirainen et al., 2010; Godet, 1987; 2000; 2004; Shoemaker, 1995; Ogilvy, Shwartz, 2004). The methodological approaches of scenarios' development are based on extreme presumptions of epistemological positions, met in social analysis paradigm: intuitive methodological approach of scenarios' development is based on interpretivism presumptions of epistemological position and *La prospective* as well as probability modified methodological approaches of scenarios' development – positiveness presumptions of epistemological position. The extreme epistemological positions can be characterised through two the most important aspects: nature of reality and methodology. Positivist social researches are based on objectivity of a researcher and quantitative strategy, meanwhile interpretivist social researches are based on subjectivity of a researcher and an exploratory and the qualitative strategy (Hudson, Ozanne, 2004; Hjørland, 2004; Tadjewski, 2006; Holden, Lynch, 2004). Having carried out the comparative analysis of the scientific sources it was identified

that the development of brand vulnerability scenarios is based on interpretivist presumptions of epistemological position.

1. Development methodology of brand vulnerability foresight scenarios

Considering the intuitive methodological approach, a grounded development process of scenarios and specificity of brand vulnerability scenarios, the development process of brand vulnerability scenarios based on intuitive methodological approach was modelled, which covers three stages and their implementations steps, discussed herein (Vainauskienė, Vaitkienė, 2013a, 2013b).

The stage of brand vulnerability foresight is implemented while realizing the following steps. **Identification of local market branch tendencies**, which may consumer based brand equity assigned to the market forces' categories of consumers and competitors, also the abstracted sub-categories of the mentioned categories. The expert evaluation is offered for the implementation of a later stage, which is implemented while applying a in-depth interview method. **Establishment of interrelation of the identified tendencies**, which allow identifying a factor potentially causing other brand vulnerability within the turbulent external environment future tendencies; interaction of tendencies while developing scenarios may reveal underlying structures of critical uncertainties and this will allow understanding the typical subject of scenarios. **Establishment of status of a current consumer based brand equity** allows identifying strong / week aspects of constituents of a consumer consumer brand equity value system. This is closely related to the stage of identification of future uncertainties. **Establishment of the uncertainty level of tendencies** in order to identify the tendencies assigned to the third and forth levels of uncertainty. Pursuant to Courtney (2003) the external uncertainties can be divided into four levels: I) it is possible to foreseen the development of a tendency immediately and to make proactive solutions; II) it is possible to name a limited number of the results caused by a tendency, out of which one is the case; III) it is possible to name various potential results of a tendency; IV) it is impossible to name potential results of a tendency. Thus the first uncertainty level includes the tendencies, which are definitions the organization has sufficient information about, in order to make the efficient brand management solutions. Meanwhile the tendencies assigned to the fourth uncertainty level are the future definitions, which will

model brand vulnerability and which shall be proactively reacted to. In order to assign the tendencies stipulated in the first stage to one of the four provided levels of uncertainty, the expert evaluation is offered which is implemented while applying a structurized interview method. **Establishment of their influence to the analysed consumer based brand equity**. This step allows clarifying critical uncertainties of the future which significantly influence development of the analysed brand vulnerability. Step **selection of scenarios logic**: future uncertainties and degree of their influence is established according to the intuitive methodological access while applying the deduction method. It entitles to fulfilling such quality criteria of scenarios as continuity, logic and clarity.

The development stage of brand vulnerability is implemented while realizing the following steps. Having clarified critical future uncertainties, which will develop brand vulnerability, **their inter-compatibility is to consumer based brand equity tested** while applying tests of internal compatibility. **Content of scenarios of brand vulnerability** is revealed through composition of future pictures of the tendencies developing brand vulnerability, through which the mentioned factors of constituent of consumer brand value will form predicted brand vulnerability decreasing management solutions for brand vulnerability. It is important to consider already identified future tendencies, since there is a possibility that the tendencies that were assigned to the first and the second levels of uncertainty are the result of a future uncertainty or their development assumption. And this allows realizing a developing subject of critical uncertainties. **Evaluation of quality of scenarios** according to the criteria typical to scenarios of a proper content: brand vulnerability foresight scenarios *credibility, comprehensibility, distinctness, transparency, equilibrium, degree of integration, challenge, readable, memorable*.

In order to fulfil the development process of brand vulnerability scenarios, it is essential to identify tools, ensuring implementation of development process of brand vulnerability. Tools for development of brand vulnerability scenarios are identified according to their adequacy to characteristics of brand vulnerability scenarios.

It was identified that looking from the point of perspective of brand vulnerability scenarios' development goal, process and content characteristics, interview and strategic foresight workshops' methods are adequate for implementation of the development stage of brand vulnerability foresight scenarios. Considering that application of scenarios' development method requires high-level involvement

of a researcher (Schwartz, 2007) and the method of interview ensures immediate contact between a researcher and the interviewed, in order to foresee brand vulnerability, the method of interview is more adequate. Steps of identification of tendencies of industry branch that cause brand vulnerability as well as their correlation are realized based on inductive logic and the form of deep interview within the context of grounded theory. Steps for establishment of influence degree of critical future uncertainties to consumer based brand equity and identification of tendencies to be assigned to the third and fourth levels of uncertainty are realized based on deductive logic, moreover, applying the form of a framed interview.

The analysis of scientific works revealed that there is no a solid agreement how to measure consumer based brand equity systematically (Veloutsou, Christodoulides, de Chernatony, 2013). The empiric study performed by is worth of analysing among the plenty of scientific studies, where results allowed identifying categories of measure variables of a consumer based brand equity: consumers' understanding of brand characteristics, consumers' affective response towards the brand, consumers' evaluation of the brand and consumers' behaviour towards the brand (Veloutsou, Christodoulides, de Chernatony, 2013). In order to develop the measure system of a consumer based brand equity that ensures the reliability of measuring consumer based brand equity, where possible, indicators of measure variables of consumer based brand equity were identified by Veloutsou, Christodoulides, de Chernatony (2013) and in order to reach versatility and operationalisation of the measure system of consumer based brand equity the influence of the above mentioned variables to the constituents of a consumer based brand equity was defined.

Scientific literature analysis states, creative writing method is adequate to elaboration of a picture development of critical future uncertainties, causing brand vulnerability. However, it is advisable to apply a system contemplation method suggested by Ogilvy, Schwartz (2004) that allows including underlying structures of critical future uncertainties into future development while elaborating the mentioned part of the content of brand vulnerability scenarios. The perspective of system contemplation is also important while identifying solutions decreasing the degree of brand vulnerability: while defining proactive solutions of branding it is important to consider their influence to inclusive consumer based brand equity, but not individual parts of consumer equity system. Meanwhile identification, which

constituent of consumer based brand equity the vulnerability of brand will be developed through during the analysed period, is based on holistic approach and establishment results of critical future uncertainties' influence degree to consumer based brand equity measure system variables and (or) indicators.

In case the goal of the study or its part is to estimate specific aspects, usually expert estimation method is applied. It is observed that theoretical and empirical studies that ground adequacy of expert estimation to risk assessment as well as uncertainties are found in the scientific literature (Rosqvist, 2003; Pluess, Groso, Meyer, 2013; Beaudrie, Kandlikar, Ramachandran, 2011). Considering the adaptability of expert estimation to risk assessment we may state that epistemological position of this method is adequate to evaluation of quality of scenarios of brand vulnerability.

First figure shows a theoretic development model of brand vulnerability scenarios that integrates development stages of brand vulnerability scenarios, implementation steps of a stage, as well as tools for steps realization and results of steps realization.

In order to implement brand vulnerability foresight scenarios methodology, the brand acting in the Lithuanian industry branch of beauty and personal care was selected. The selected brand is one of the leaders in the mentioned industry branch, which is characterized by the following features of identity: advanced cosmetics, developed for solving specific skin problems, made from the most advantage ingredients, which efficiency is based on scientific tests; the brand values: beauty and expertise; priority fields: face and hair.

The empiric test of two stages was carried out in order to develop vulnerability foresight scenarios of the analysed brands:

1.1 The first stage of empiric analysis

In order to foreseen the vulnerability of brands of the Lithuanian beauty and personal care products in 2020, a group of experts that participated in the empiric study was made from the employees of five organizations operating and manufacturing, distributing and allocating beauty and personal care products in Lithuania. The admission of the strategic brand management solutions is impossible without a constant market scanning. Thus the presumption within the methodology of the analysis that can provide qualified information also on the future external tendencies is made. Hence, the experts were applied with selective criterion – admission of the strategic brand management solutions.

The Lithuanian cosmetic market tendencies for the year of 2020 are identified by mean of

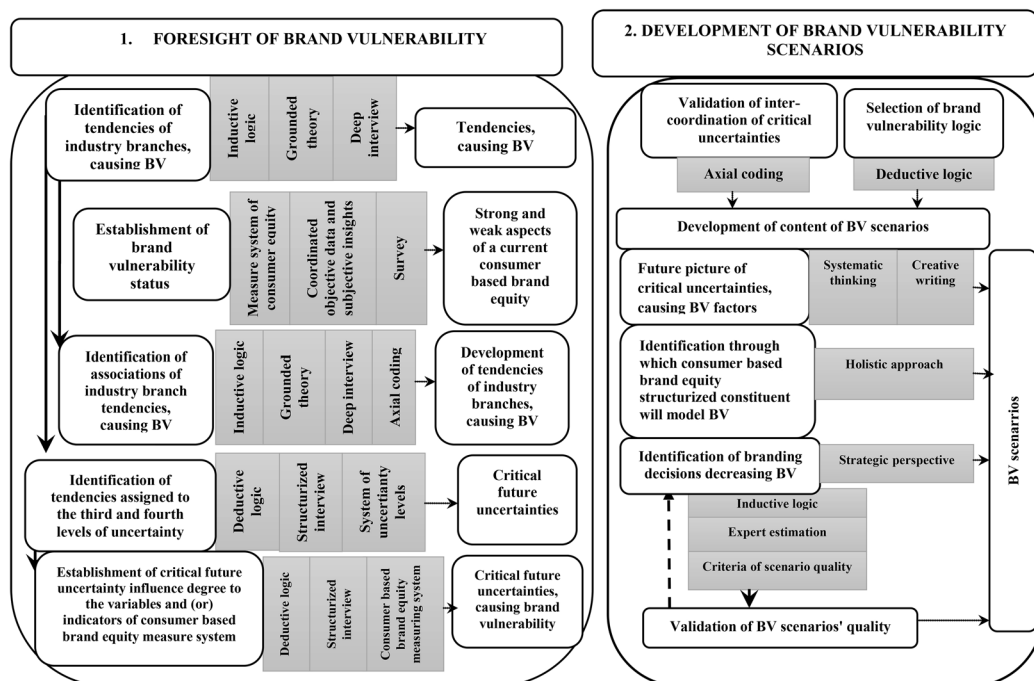


Figure 1 Theoretical model of brand vulnerability scenarios' development. Source: Author's own study.

in-depth- interview directly with an individual expert. Having completed the interview and after transcribing them, the initial data are analysed using a qualitative data analysis software package *Atlas.ti 20*. The possibilities of this program allowed structurizing transcripts of interview, identifying essential text pieces, coding them in the interdependent significant categories, which reflect future tendencies of the Lithuanian market of beauty and personal care product sector in 2020, finding links consumer based brand equity between the tendencies and drawing links connecting the chains.

The uncertainty level of the identified tendencies is established by mean of the structurized interview consumer based brand equity between expert, asking to assign each tendency to one of the four uncertainty levels. The obtained data are processed using Microsoft Office Excel 2010 by establishing the frequency of tendency attribution to each of uncertainty level.

1.2 The second stage of empiric analysis

In order to identify the current situation of consumer value of brand A, the consumer value measure system was prepared, which covers the following categories of consumer brand value measure vari-

ables and indicators: consumers' understanding of brand characteristics, consumers' affective response towards brand, consumers' evaluation of the brand and consumers' behaviour towards the brand. The measure of consumer brand A value was carried out by applying method of questioning in writing and method of the convenient non-probability selection. The value of consumer brand value was analysed within three levels. During the analysis of the current brand A situation the aim was to question not only the consumers (loyal) of the highest relation level with brand A, but also the ones who started to develop relation with the analysed brand, i.e. satisfied with brand and trusting in it.

In order to establish the main tendencies of the Lithuanian mass beauty and personal care products industry branches identified during the first empiric analysis stage, and developing the vulnerability of brand, till 2020 years influence level analysed constituents of brand consumer value the structurized interview expert method was applied. The influence level of the mentioned non-identified tendencies to the consumer brand value was established by the employees of the organization managing these brands. Considering the mentioned that the influence level might be identified by employees, analysing

factors of external environment and responsible for brand management, the group of experts included two experts: Project Manager of Marketing of brand A and the Marketing Manager of organization managing the analysed brand.

2. Results of empiric analysis

2.1 The results of the first stage of empiric analysis

Having analysed the initial data obtained from the in-depth interview of experts it is obvious that 49 tendencies will have influence to the vulnerability of brands operating in the Lithuanian beauty and personal care products industry branch, which may consumer based brand equity grouped into the groups of tendencies of competitiveness, customers' needs and habits, customers' characteristics, making decision to buy, distribution channels and suppliers

After analysing the summarized results of experts' survey it may consumer based brand equity stated that the experts with one accord agreed on the uncertainty level of 26 tendencies, meanwhile attribution of other tendencies to one of the uncertainty levels was disagreed, thus the succeeding empirical studies are required in order to evaluate their uncertainty level.

The summarized results of this study revealed that in experts' opinion the vulnerability of the

Lithuanian mass beauty and personal care brands in 2020 will potentially consumer based brand equity modelled by 49 tendencies, where two are named as the highest future uncertainties.

Based on the results of empiric study, it might be stated that grounding of identification of industry branch tendencies, causing brand vulnerability as well as method of deep interview allow identifying dominating and potentially causing brand vulnerability tendencies in the selected industry branch and the selected period of the future. However, it is observed that not all the potential tendencies, which might be foreseen from the current point of view, were identified.

Having drawn the networks reflecting links of the external tendencies it is obvious that the highlighted tendencies influence each other. Thus the uncertainty tendencies defined in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd levels directly or indirectly influence the highlighted uncertainties. The establishment between future tendencies provided the possibility to identify the grounding structures of future uncertainties.

Having implemented the identification stage of correlation of industry branch tendencies, causing brand vulnerability it is observed that in case of applying the deep interview method not all the potential correlations between industry branch tendencies, causing brand vulnerability were identified, thus the analysis of quantitative data was grounded by the insights of other authors.

Table 1 Uncertainties which will model the vulnerability of the Lithuanian mass beauty and personal care product brands until 2020.

Tendencies of competitiveness till 2020	
1. Competitiveness via anti-aging products	
2. Competitiveness via co-branding	
3. Competitiveness via innovations	
4. Intensive competitiveness	
5. Competitiveness via consumers' consultancy (for instance, on social networks, in-stores, etc.)	
6. Competitiveness while identifying cosmetic products with plastic surgery	
7. Intensive competitiveness condition advantage to a consumer (for instance, lower product price)	
8. Competitiveness via scale economics	
9. Competitiveness via segment of a city consumers	
10. Competitiveness via development of myths about cosmetic products	
11. Competitiveness via nano-particles	
12. Competitiveness via dishonest towards a consumer	
13. Competitiveness via 'premunisation'.	
14. Competitiveness via pseudo-ecology	
15. Competitiveness via specific denunciation	
16. Competitiveness while offering a consumer the technology of use of cosmetic products (for instance, the cream application technology)	
17. Strengthening of pharmacy chain positions (as a competitor's)	

Tendencies of consumer's demands till 2020

18. Demand for efficient cosmetic products
 19. Demand for organic cosmetic products
 20. Demand for good emotions, related to consumption of a cosmetic product
 21. Demand for cosmetic products, assuring youth and beauty
 22. Demand for plastic surgery, injections
 23. Increasing demand for hair care products
 24. Demand for healthy life
 25. Transfer from massive to niche-manner cosmetic product
 26. Demand for multifunction products
 27. Demand to moisten skin
 28. Demand for professional consultancies regarding a cosmetic product
 29. Demand for a cosmetic product corresponding the global cosmetic tendencies
 30. Increasing demand for cosmetic products in men segment
 31. Demand of men segment for multifunction products
 32. The use of men segment cosmetics will remain passive
-

Tendencies of factors causing decision to buy till 2020

33. Advises of experts will influence a decision to buy a cosmetic product
 34. Texture and aroma of a cosmetic product will influence a decision to buy
 35. A decision to buy a cosmetic product will be influenced by its package
 36. A decision to buy a cosmetic product will be influenced by recommendations
 37. Adequately understands the ratio between price and quality
 38. Does not believe in advertisement
 39. Cannot read ingredients
 40. Increasing purchasing force
 41. Saves time
-

Tendencies of distribution channels till 2020

42. Sale of cosmetic products in self-service slot machines
 43. Popularity of on-line stores
 44. Entrance of global cosmetic distribution chain(s) in the Lithuanian market
 45. Increase of specialized stores selling cosmetics
 46. Strengthening of a position of pharmacies as a place selling cosmetic products
-

Tendencies of suppliers till 2020

47. Consolidation of suppliers from developing countries
 48. Decrease of competitiveness among suppliers
 49. The raw offered by the developing countries is cheaper
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Source: Author's own study

The system of uncertainties level by Courtney, Kirkland, Viguere (1997), the method of scenarios' development is applied when future tendencies are attributed to the third and fourth level of uncertainties. Experts that participated in the third level of uncertainties assigned the following tendencies of the Lithuanian beauty and personal care industry branch till 2020: *competitiveness via co-branding*, transfer from massive to niche-manner cosmetic product, passiveness of cosmetic use in men segment, advises of experts, will influence a decision to buy a cosmetic product, a decision to buy a cosmetic

product will be influenced by its package, consumers will not believe in advertisement, consumers cannot read ingredients, popularity of on-line stores, entrance of global cosmetic distribution chain(s) in the Lithuanian market of beauty and personal care products' industry branch and increase of specialised stores selling cosmetics. Meanwhile the forth level of uncertainty only covered one tendency: *decrease of competitiveness among suppliers*.

Identification of critical uncertainties causing brand vulnerability was based on expert estimation method. It was observed that the analysis of initial

data obtained during the expert evaluation and interpretation could be more significant in case not only the level of tendency uncertainty would be identified, but also the selected motives would be explained.

Based on principles of methodology of scenarios' development, the scenarios are developed for main critical future uncertainties, since one of the most important assumptions of quality scenarios is the limited number of the mentioned, otherwise the make of strategic solutions is impeded and the surplus of future scenarios that usually uniquely does not affect the potential solutions of analysed problem is generated.

In order to identify the main critical future uncertainties from the eleven future tendencies presented above, the causal relationship theory, which outlines the inter-dependence of several phenomena, is applied: one phenomenon (cause) is a reason for other phenomenon (outcome) to emerge and a reason is anterior than an outcome. In other words, in this context, the critical future uncertainty shall be treated the tendency that is a result and not the tendency that is a reason among the eleven uncertainty tendencies. The latter assumption may be grounded as follows: a tendency as a reason is created in advance thus it cannot be managed proactively if compared to a tendency as an outcome. Thus the vulnerability of brand will be directly developed by a tendency as an outcome and not a tendency as a result. Conceptual maps of tendencies till 2020 allowed identifying the following basic future uncertainties of the Lithuanian beauty and personal care products that potentially will develop vulnerability of brand A. advises of experts will influence a decision to buy a cosmetic product, a decision to buy a cosmetic product will be influenced by its package, increase of specialized stores selling cosmetics and decrease of competitiveness among suppliers.

2.2 The results of the second stage of empiric analysis

Having summarized, analysed and interpreted the initial data of questioning, the weak aspects of consumer value of brand A were identified.

- Having measured *characteristics of a consumer's understanding about brand* it was established that constituent of awareness of consumer brand A is weakened by the ability of satisfied, self-confident and loyal consumers to restore information about the mentioned brand, and thus it is presumed that associations of brand are also fixed in consumers' conscious faintly. It was also established that one of the main threats to consumer brand A value mi-

ght be stated that consumers do not consider any of the formed associations as strongly or soundly fixed in their conscious. Thus none of the associations will remain in consumers' conscious especially quickly while making a decision to buy. Also that consumers within the whole levels of relations with analysed brand do not have a clearly identified provisions on brand A might be mentioned, and this is a direct threat that satisfied and self-confident consumers will not evolve into the level of loyal brand relations and the obligation of loyal consumers to brand A will faint.

- Having measured *consumer's response to brand A characteristics* it is clear that self-confident and satisfied consumers with brand A do not identify themselves with the analysed brand and this weakens a consumer brand A value.
- Having measured *consumer brand A assessment characteristics* it was established that first of all loyal consumers of the mentioned brand do not identify it as a market leader, thus a solid threat exist that loyal consumers will start developing relation with others that occupy major market part (beauty and personal care product brands). The second is that consumers in the whole levels of relations with brand A think that actions of organization do not synchronize with a real cosmetic product of A brand.
- The following insights might be established after measuring *characteristics of consumer behaviour; related to brand A*: consumers are not ready to give own resources and image due to brand A, and this might be stated as a potential threat, causing consumers non-evolve into a higher level of relations with brand.

Looking from the perspective of the methodology of brand vulnerability scenarios' development, it might be stated that measure of consumer based brand equity while applying questioning survey method allowed revealing weak and strong aspects of the analysed brand consumer based equity.

Two uncertainties causing brand A were established while applying expert assessment method, i.e. *advises of experts will influence a decision to buy a cosmetic product and a decision to buy a cosmetic product will be influenced by its package*. However, it is observed that these uncertainties of the Lithuanian beauty and personal care industry branch will create vulnerability of brand A through different constituents of consumer values.

- The future uncertainty *advises of experts will influence a decision to buy a cosmetic product*

will affect brand A through consumers' provisions about brand and through features of brand individual competence dimension reliability and wisdom.

- The future uncertainty *decision to buy a cosmetic product will be influenced by its package* will affect brand A through strength and favour of associations, feature of brand individual competence dimension reliability and through the consumers' satisfaction with brand, loyalty towards brand and through its prestige.

Identification of influence of uncertainties to consumer based brand equity, based on expert estimation method and the system of four uncertainty levels, allowed defining critical future uncertainties, causing vulnerability of a specific brand. However, the problem that selection motives of experts was impossible, moreover, identification how future uncertainties will cause the vulnerability of the analysed brands was faced while interpreting the initial data.

Initial data generated during the first and second empiric stages allow explicating the content of the vulnerability foresight scenario of the analysed brand, covering the future picture of the established uncertainties and the identification through which the constituent of consumer brand value will develop the vulnerability of brand A. Following the vulnerability foresight scenarios of brand organization may model proactive solutions for management of brand A.

3. Foresight scenarios of brand A vulnerability

The following uncertainties will condition the vulnerability of brand A till 2020: "decision to buy will be influenced by its package" and "advises of experts will influence a decision to buy". These future uncertainties were assigned to the third level of uncertainty, thus the spectrum / boundaries of results of these potential uncertainties might be identified, however, it is impossible to predict specific results.

Premium package. One of the communications on brand tools while developing scenario of "Premium package" in the industry branch of mass beauty and personal care will be not celebrities, but consultancies by professional experts, which in present situation are common for niche-manner beauty and personal care industry branch. After this tendency will settle, in order to develop a professional image of mass beauty and personal care, also to increase its consumption, the strategy of co-branding may be

applied. One of the main and most reliable application result of the mentioned strategy in the discussed time horizon is the technology of use of mass beauty and personal care product, for instance, pipette, ampoules, brushes, applicators, tips, etc. The latter tendency implicates that the intensity of competitiveness in the Lithuanian mass beauty and personal care industry branch will be conditioned by a radical change of the packages of mass beauty and personal care products in order to provide them properties of professional (niche-manner) beauty and personal care products.

The application of strategy "Premumisation" will determine intensity of competitiveness in the industry branch while developing scenario "Premium package", which will be expressed through supplement of a mass beauty and personal care product composition with specific functional properties.

Together with domination of the tendency of demographic explosion generation in the global environment, the consumers' demand to preserve youth and beauty using efficient cosmetic products will dominate in the Lithuanian industry branch of mass beauty and personal care products, which will also condition the development of strategy "premumisation".

The demand to preserve youth and beauty using effective products will condition a demand of mass beauty and personal care products, featuring with "anti-aging" function and helping to preserve the youth of skin and hair. During the beginning of the period between 2014–2020 a supplement of mass beauty and personal care products with a popular ingredient nano-particles, which is used to minimize face skin wrinkles, is expected. Mass beauty and personal care products supplemented with nano-particles will be communicated as penetrating into deeper skin layers and thus ensuring a constant effect. On the other hand, products supplemented with nano-particles may also not enter the Lithuanian industry branch of beauty and personal care, since its effect on humans is not tested yet.

All the presented improvement of mass beauty and personal care products reflects the same tendency, *i.e.* development of myths about cosmetic products. The essence of this tendency is reflected by the provision that all the combining results of brands and supplement of mass beauty and personal care products' composition with innovative particles or function in general is only a myth, since cosmetic products may not penetrate into deeper skin or hair levels and thus may not ensure efficiency and long lasting effect.

In this situation the aim is to fortify associations as of advanced, modern, reliable, quality and

effective brand A in consumer's conscious. One of the communication tools as of advanced, modern, reliable, quality and effective brand A is the package of A products, whereas special attention is paid to its modern, hygienic, convenience and professional properties, however, they anchored into consumer's conscious only slightly strongly in this situation.

A decision to buy mass beauty and personal care products will be strongly caused by a package of a product and the consumer equity of brand A will be influenced as follows:

Favour and strength of associations of brand A. In the present situation consumers of brand A meanly strongly associate brand A with attractive package and meanly friendly value this property of a package. Consumers will absolutely friendly value a package as a property of beauty and personal care brand while developing scenario "Premium package". In this case if consumers will absolutely strongly not associate brand A with attractive package, a threat to develop the vulnerability of brand through the constituent of consumers' loyalty towards brand emerges

Vulnerability of brand A will potentially model through variables of consumers' satisfaction, loyalty and prestige while scenario "Premium package" will develop.

In the present status of consumer brand value A the major part of consumers developing relation with brand A is satisfied with brand A, thus currently there is no threat that consumers will terminate their relations with the analysed brand.

However, consumers response to brand is conditioned based on consumers' understanding on properties of brand, here – associations. In this case, if the absolutely strong association as of attractive package of brand A will not anchor in consumers' conscious and the consumer will not value it absolutely friendly, the trust of consumers with brand will weaken and thus the vulnerability of brand will develop through the constituent of loyalty to brand: satisfaction of consumers does not evolve brand into trust, and trust is the assumption of loyalty.

In the present situation of brand A consumer value consumers have not decided if brand A is prestigious or not. Within the development of scenario "Premium package", brand of mass beauty and personal care may associate with as prestigious one only in that case if it fulfils requirements of professional brand. In this situation such brand A, which express the professional properties of this brand (Anti-aging, Absolute repair system, Magic hair, Beauty effect). However, it is obvious that this is not enough in order a consumer would associate this brand with

professionalism and, thus – prestigious. In order to ensure prestigious of brand A during the period between 2014–2020, it is essential to provide more properties of professional beauty and personal care products or to chose more efficient their communication channels.

3.1 "Du poliai" (Two poles)

Scenario "Du poliai" features with two radically different factors, dominating in the Lithuanian industry branch of beauty and personal care that influence a decision to buy: a significant role of experts and a package, making a decision to buy a beauty and personal care product will develop distinguished consumers' properties and demands till 2020. Increase of consumers' purchasing force, inaptitude to read beauty and personal care ingredients, disbelief in advertisement and time saving are obvious reasons, causing unambiguous consumers' demand to trust in professional beauty and personal care experts and a package of beauty and personal care product. Predominance of the latter uncertainties in the market of beauty and personal care products will be a reason to condition non-traditional distribution channels of mass beauty and personal care products, where the main accent is the possibility to consult with professional experts and to buy products of mass beauty and personal care, featuring with properties of professional products.

The role of pharmacies, as a distribution channel of beauty and personal products, will anchor in the beginning of the period between 2014–2020. Pharmacies and products offered by them associate with professionalism, thus it is believed that pharmacies will alter own strategies in order to become one of the main sellers of beauty and personal care products. During the discussed period pharmacies will take a significant place not only on the distribution market of beauty and personal care products, but also will become new participants of beauty and personal care industry branch, who distribute and produce the mentioned beauty and personal care products. In the conscious of consumers, beauty and personal care products sold in pharmacies will associate with professional consultancies that may be provided by experts working in a pharmacy. Infiltration of a new participant into industry branch is an indicator of intensive competitiveness dominating in industry branch. On the other hand, international brands of beauty and personal care products, featuring with competence of mass economics, which is the assumption of competitiveness intensity decrease, operate in the Lithuanian industry branch of beauty and personal care, moreover, will operate

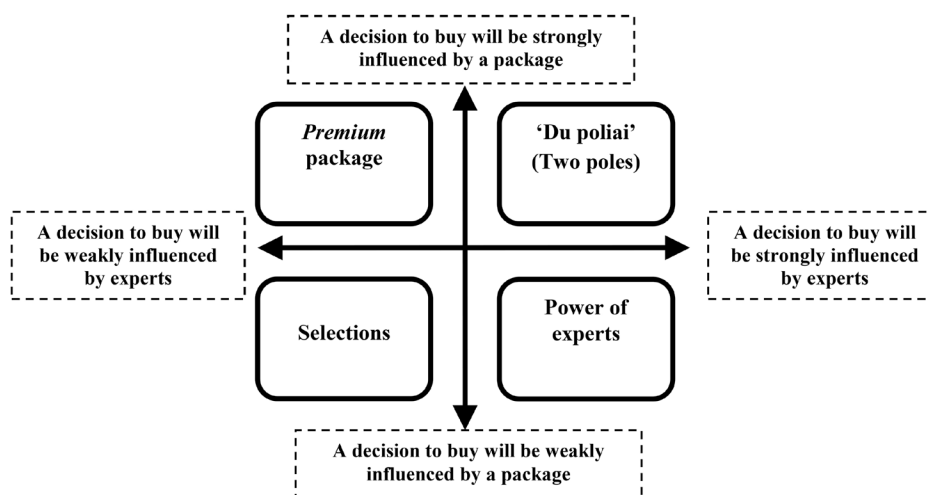


Figure 2 Vulnerability foresight scenarios for brand A till 2020. Source: Author's own study.

during the discussed period as well as cover a significant part of it: mass economics deter new market participants from entering the market, since it requires solid investments and evokes a response of aggressive market participants.

- a) Pharmacies that consumers associate with professionalism may become not only sale and distribution channels of beauty and personal care, but also a tool of competitiveness for organizations, distributing and producing beauty products: it is believed that distribution of mass beauty and personal care products through pharmacy networks will ensure involvement association with professional experts of beauty and personal care and hereby will enrich with a property of professional product a mass beauty and personal care product. Together with consultancies of professionals, a decision to buy a beauty and personal care product will be conditioned by a package, expressing professional properties of mass beauty and personal care that were caused by strategies of "premiumisation" and co-branding.
- b) Within the interaction of experts and a package, as factors together influencing a decision to buy, the consumer value of brand A will be conditioned through a property of reliability of this brand individual competence dimension. In the present situation, consumers of brand A do not feature with clearly expressed provision about the mentioned brand and have not decided if its character is reliable. In the current situation, identity development process for brand A involves Lithuanian celebrities. Meanwhile only some products of

brand A are distributed in pharmacies, although professionalism of brand A is communicated through its package.

- c) Predominance of experts, as a factor causing a decision to buy, during the discussed period may be influenced by negative provisions of consumers that this brand cannot satisfy their requirements for effective products of beauty and personal care if consulted by professional experts. In case not making proactive management solutions for brand A in the beginning of the period 2014–2020, which aim is to involve professional experts as a support tool in positioning process of brand A, the destruction of loyalty of brand A is expected.
- d) Expertness associates with reliability. Thus, in the present situation consumers of brand A are not sure if this brand is an expert of beauty and personal care. Without making proactive decisions on management of this brand that could strengthen dimension of brand A identity competence through the property of credibility, the destruction of the constituent of brand A consumer brand value loyalty to brand is expected.
- e) It is important to state that strongly dominating factors, i.e. "premium package" and "experts' decision to buy", in synergism through the property or identity credibility of brand A influencing consumer value may radically influence loyalty of brand A in a negative way. Thus, it is important to provide the property of credibility to both, package of A products and experts, recommending products of this brand, while making management decisions of brand A.

3.2 Power of experts

Scenario "Power of experts" is based on a domination of a single essential factor conditioning a decision, i.e. recommendations of professional expert of beauty and personal care products. During the development of this scenario, a decision to buy beauty and personal care products will slightly be influenced by "premium package" and such together acting factors as live recommendations and texture as well as aroma of beauty and personal care product, a decision to buy the discussed product will influence minimally. Thus, "premium" properties in this scenario to mass beauty and personal care products will be provided through recommendations and consultancies of professional experts. Organizations, seeking to increase and ensure consumption of mass beauty and personal care products will position brands not through celebrities, but through experts – professionals.

Experts as a factor conditioning a decision to buy developed seeking to satisfy consumers' demand for professional consultancies prior purchasing a beauty and personal care product. Meanwhile consumers' demand for consultancies is an assumption to distribute the mentioned products through sale points, where professional consultancies are available.

It is believed that aside a role of pharmacy networks, a role of professional experts will condition establishment and popularity of specialized sale points of beauty and personal care products while making a decision to buy. It is provided that during the period of 2014–2020, the role of on-line stores of specialized beauty and personal care products in the discussed industry branch will only increase if compared with the present situation. However, on-line stores of beauty and personal care will develop value added through virtual consultancies of professionals – experts prior purchasing a beauty and personal care product. A demand for consultancies of professional experts will also fulfil self-service slot machines and penetration of global networks the Lithuanian industry branch of beauty and personal care. It is believed that during the development of scenario "Power of experts" brand vulnerability will be conditioned through consumers' provisions on brand A and a wisdom feature of this brand competence dimension:

- a) In current situation consumers have not decided if brand A distinguishes or not from other brands operating in beauty and personal care industry branch. Oneness of beauty and personal care brand, while developing scenario "Power of experts", will be developed through specialized distribution channels, where professional con-

sultancies are available. In this case, if products of brand A only fragmentally will be distributed through specialized sale points, there is a threat that brand A will not distinguish from other brands acting in analysed industry branch and in such way vulnerability of brand will develop through constituent of loyalty.

- b) In that case, if products of brand A will only fragmentally distributed through specialized sale points, identity of brand A in consumers' conscious will not feature with property of wisdom, since wisdom may be closely related to expertness. In this situation vulnerability of brand A will be conditioned through the constituent of loyalty to brand.
- c) During the development of scenario "Power of experts" it is essential to change distribution strategies of brand A and to sell products of brand A to end-users not in mass shopping centres, but through specialized sale points mentioned in scenario.

3.3 Selections

During the development of scenario "Selections" both, experts and a package, will only slightly influence a decision to buy a beauty and personal care product. Thus it is believed that a decision to buy the mentioned products is conditioned by a texture, aroma and live recommendation, as factors together affecting a decision to buy. It is provided that during the period 2014–2020 texture.

Discussion

This study covers the case of vulnerability foresight of brand operating in the Lithuanian industry branch of beauty and personal care while applying the scenarios' developing method. However, it is important to state that the vulnerability foresight scenarios of the mentioned industry market leader and non-leader were developed while applying the methodology for development of vulnerability foresight scenarios for brand, presented in this article.

Considering the application of methodology for development of vulnerability foresight scenarios for brand it can be stated that this methodology may be adapted in industry branch and thus, is sufficiently universal in order to foresight vulnerabilities of brands intended for end-users and to identify proactive development solutions for co-branding.

Each of the scenarios' quality criteria are ensured by continuity of implementation steps of brand vulnerability scenarios and tools for realization of

Table 2 Adequacy of the analysed scenarios of brand vulnerability to criteria of scenarios' quality.

Criteria of scenarios of quality	Development stages of brand vulnerability scenarios	
	Foresight of brand vulnerability	Development of brand vulnerability scenarios
Credibility	✓	✓
Comprehensibility		✓
Distinctness	✓	✓
Transparency	✓	
Equilibrium degree of integration	✓	
Challenge		✓
Readable		✓
Memorable		

Source: Author's own study

steps (see Table 2). It is observed that the developed brand scenarios during the discussion were tested according to the criteria of scenarios' quality. As the processed and analysed results of group discussion revealed, scenarios of the analysed brand vulnerability are *credibility, comprehensibility, distinctness, transparency, equilibrium, degree of integration, challenge, readable*. However, participated experts indicated that they cannot be easily remembered.

Having analysed and interpreted the initial data, it is established that vulnerability scenarios of the analysed brands are of proper quality; however, in order to seek for accuracy of methodology for development of brand vulnerability scenarios it is important to revise the following aspects.

Having implemented the methodology of development of brand vulnerability scenarios with regard to brand, existing in industry branch, it might be discussed if improper experts or non-adequate method had been selected ensuring more efficient brand vulnerability scenarios' development process.

It is believed that more tendencies could be identified if more various spectrum of internal and external interviewed would participate in the deep interview. Thus it is recommended to select external and internal aspects according to the dynamic brand ecosystem model, covering the following elements: consumer, competition, shareholders, influencers, media, suppliers, employees.

It was observed that during the stages of identification of uncertainty level of future tendencies as well as critical uncertainties, it is purposeful to apply a method that would assist not only identifying uncertainty level of future tendencies causing brand vulnerability and the degree of influence of critical future uncertainties to consumer based brand equity, but also would allow establishing experts'

selection arguments. Argued selection of experts' uncertainty level of future tendencies and critical future uncertainties' influence to consumer based equity constituent would expand understanding of future situations and content of brand vulnerability scenarios.

Despite the fact that elaboration of the content of brand vulnerability scenarios is based on researcher's creativeness, in order to achieve particularity of the content of brand vulnerability scenarios and comprehensive display of future picture, the stage of brand vulnerability scenarios' development shall be developed while modelling detailed rules of brand vulnerability scenarios. It is important to use visualisation technologies while seeking for a clear rendering of expanded content of brand vulnerability scenarios and easy understanding.

As it was mentioned in the beginning of this article, development of brand vulnerability scenarios is based on conceptual provision that it is important to ground the development of these such scenarios by intuitive methodologic approach of scenarios' development, which reflects presumptions of positive epistemologic position. By summarizing, it may be stated that development process of scenarios based on intuitive methodologic approach ensures qualitative brand vulnerability scenarios. thus, one of the development trends of development of brand vulnerability scenarios is coordination of intuitive and prediction based methodologic approaches of scenarios' development

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